

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following is a complete listing of the claims, and replaces all earlier listings and all earlier versions.

1. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus comprising:
extraction means for extracting a pixel signal of an image pickup means that has a plurality of pixels, and for determining positional information of defective pixels based on the pixel signal;
block-forming means for judging whether a plurality of the defective pixels are adjacent to each other on the basis of the positional information of the defective pixels and for extracting regional information of the adjacent defective pixels and dividing each of the adjacent defective pixels into groups; [[and]]
storage means for storing the extracted regional information of the adjacent defective pixels each said groups; and
correction means for correcting said defective pixels by using peripheral pixels of the defective pixels,
wherein said correction means do not use the other defective pixels of the group to correct said defective pixels based on said regional information of the group in a case in which the defective pixels in the group are corrected.

2. - 30. (Canceled).

31. (Previously Presented) An image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said block-forming means expresses the position and the width of the defective pixels adjacent in one direction using run-length coding.

32. (Currently Amended) An image processing apparatus according to claim [[30]] 1, wherein said correction means takes a pixel region necessary to correct the adjacent defective pixels from an output image of the image pickup means and corrects those defective pixels by using pixels in that pixel region by using the regional information.

33. (Previously Presented) An image processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said extraction means judges pixels defective when the value of the pixel signal is within a predetermined range and determines the positional information of the defective pixels.

34. (Previously Presented) An image processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said correction means takes a pixel region necessary to correct the adjacent defective pixels from an output image of an image pickup means and corrects those defective pixels by using pixels in that pixel region by using the regional information.

35. (Currently Amended) An image processing method comprising:
a first step, of extracting a pixel signal of image pickup means having a plurality of pixels and determining positional information of defective pixels based on the pixel signal;

a second step, of judging whether a plurality of defective pixels are adjacent to each other on the basis of the positional information of defective pixels and for extracting regional information of adjacent defective pixels and dividing each of the adjacent defective pixels into groups; [[and]]

a third step, of storing a regional information of each said group; and
a third fourth step, of correcting the defective pixels by using peripheral pixels of the defective pixels,

wherein in said third fourth step includes changing a correction method of, the other defective pixels by using the regional information of the group are not used to correct said defective pixels based on said regional information of the group in a case in which the defective pixels in the group are corrected.

36. (Cancelled).

37. (Currently Amended) A storage medium storing a program which comprises:

a first step, of extracting a pixel signal of an image pickup means that has a plurality of pixels, and determining positional information of defective pixels based on the pixel signal;

a second step, of judging whether a plurality of the defective pixels are adjacent to each other on the basis of the positional information of the defective pixels, and extracting regional information of the adjacent defective pixels and dividing each of the adjacent defective pixels into groups; [[and]]

a third step, of storing a regional information of each said group; and
a ~~third~~ fourth step, of correcting the defective pixels by using peripheral
pixels of the defective pixels,

wherein in said ~~third~~ fourth step includes changing a correction method of,
the other defective pixels by using the regional information of the group are not used to
correct said defective pixels based on said regional information of the group.

38. (Cancelled).